ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

[00160]   An optical switch network (4) includes optical routers (10), which route information in optical fibers (12). Each fiber carries a plurality of data channels (20), collectively a data channel group (14), and a control channel (16).

5   Data is carried on the data channels in data bursts and control information is carried on the control channel (18) in burst header packets. A burst header packet includes routing information for an associated data burst (28) and precedes its associated data burst. Parallel scheduling at multiple delays may be used for faster scheduling. In one embodiment, unscheduled times and gaps

10   may be processed in a unified memory for more efficient operation.